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JOE W. HANEY: SEPTEMBER 13, 1925:  
CHAPTER 9

“Luke, I am going to tell you something I’ve never told you,” Joe W. Haney, 63 revealed to his long time friend in the basement of his Double Springs home, west of Cookeville, June 8, 1988.

“My father Carson Haney said you were coming to the barn to get a load of whiskey and for me to make dare sure you paid after loading out. He tossed me a Smith & Wesson .45 caliber six-shooter and a double-barreled shotgun,” Haney said as he adjusted his glasses while rocking back and forth in a wooden chair.

“That was probably in 1940, as I was about 15 or 16-years-old and you had a shiny ’40 Ford,” Haney recalled.

“You were right about the loading,” Luke Denny said, “I had known your pa for some time. I had contracted many a gallon from other moonshiners in the Seven Knobs Community of Jackson County (Tennessee), but I think I picked up my first load from your dad about 1940.” After pausing for a moment the moonshine runner softly added, “And, after all these years I didn’t know you had those guns trained on me.”

Both men laughed and Haney returned to the conversation. “Dad had made moonshine all his life and if he didn’t know a person I had to stand guard. If they tried to leave without paying for the ‘shine I was to shoot the tires out from under them, and I most certainly would have, too. Luke, would you like to see those guns? I have them handy.”

Without hesitation the old moonshine runner shook his head yes and within a couple of minutes we were looking at the two weapons. “After you loaded out the second time dad made me leave my hiding place, get down to the barn to help him and some of the other men carry the moonshine and place it in your car. I will never forget you, Luke. You always had the sharpest, latest model car. You had on a suit and was always joking and

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full of laughter. Do you remember when I asked to ride with you?” Before answering Joe announced in a higher tone of voice, “You said, ‘If you got guts get in, if not get out!’”

Luke quickly smiled and nodded, “Oh yes, I remember that statement and it was the truth. See, you were strong as a little ox and I hated to load and unload the booze at the bootleggers. However, I recalled checking with Carson to see if it was okay with him. Although he wasn’t thrilled with the idea of his 15 or 16-year-old lad riding with a whiskey runner, he finally gave the thumbs up.”

“Our first trip,” Haney continued, “was to a black community in Carthage. Boy do I remember that night. First I was scared, but I had confidence in you. You were my hero. I had heard tales about your driving heroics, tales about you and good lookin’ women of the night, and I only saw you in those spiffy clothes. We rolled across the Cumberland Bridge in the middle of the night. I really thought I was in high cotton. I thought I was a big shot, riding with all that illegal whiskey in a fancy new car. Then when the colored folks didn’t want to pay you I wasn’t sure this moonshine running was for me. Can you recall what you told them Luke?” the younger man said.

“Hell yes. I said, something like, ‘I don’t give a good damn how you pay me, but I want my money before I leave...right now.’ And yes, it took us all night, it seemed to count all those pennies. I was pissed about that. The next time I delivered their whiskey I had the ‘green’ before any moon left my car.

Haney returned to the conversation, “We went to Hartsville a few times to that lady’s joint. Then I seem to remember a trip or two to Chestnut Mound in Smith County. After that I started hauling some of dad’s whiskey in a ’37 Ford. I believe my first solo run was to Kentucky.

“Before long I was driving fast and drinkin’ too much. It was about this time my buddy and I put away about a quart of the juice. We were singing some old tune and traveling about 70 to 75 mph. My partner said, as we started sliding, “There’s a curve!” I said, ‘It’s too late now,’ and away we went turning over and over as we rolled into the creek, upside down. Remember too, it was pitch black outside that night and my friend asked was I hurt. I felt my arm and it was all wet and he got mighty

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concerned. We walked up and out of that embankment to a lady’s house and told her it was an emergency. After she lit the kerosene lamp and we saw that the liquid on my arm was nothing but creek water instead of blood, she was angry and said, ‘I don’t care for all this drinkin’ and carousin’. Now you two boys get out of her and go where you came from.”

“Did you ever get caught?” Luke returned to the conversation.

“No, never did,” the stocky Haney said. “But one time ‘Sicy’ (Silas Anderson, the federal alcohol tax unit officer) nearly caught me with two 100 pound sacks of sugar. I was riding a mare from the barn to the still when all of a sudden the ears of my horse stood straight up. About that time, Mr. Anderson jumped from the tall weeds and grabbed the reins and was reaching for me when I pushed one of those sack’s of sugar down on the chest of the revenuer. He fell. Without thinking, I was loose and flying down that path. Now let me tell you something, I was scared out of my wits. I heard a couple of shots, but I knew if Sicy wanted to hit me he probably could have since I was at such close range. He more than likely fired in the air, because I have never heard of him shootin any of the whiskey makers or runners.

“Mr. Anderson was a respected lawman. He caught more Jackson County moonshiners than anyone in history. I’m sure,” Joe said. “He nabbed dad in 1949 or ’50, at the still on Gin Branch. Dad got probation. That was the first time he was caught.

“The second time was a year or two later. This time he was stoppe3d on Backbone Ridge with a truck load of liquor. The Tennessee Highway Patrol grabbed him and the judge took dad’s truck, his whiskey and his gun. But, he didn’t have to make time.

“Sometime in ’53 or ’54 the Cookeville Chief of Police caught him making deliveries on Cedar Street in Cookeville. That was the main drag back then. Someone informed on Carson, that was the reason he was grabbed.” Haney explained. “And, that was the last time dad was caught by the law. He didn’t spend any time in jail for making illegal whiskey.”

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Luke added, “Back in those early days most people didn’t have any money and making moonshine was just about the only way they could have spending money, back in the hill country. By the way, what was your dad’s secret for brewing such good moonshine?”

“First, dad always looked for good, clear, fresh mountain water, without a trace of minerals. Then he had to find good cover or a hiding place. Dad always made sure his sugar, which came from Gainesboro, was the best he could buy and the moonshine had to be heated and cooled just so, so. He was very particular about his liquor and people seemed proud to get dad’s shine. We were honored to be known, back then, as good whiskey makers. People today have a different view of those old days,” Joe Haney pointed out.

“In the early ‘40s, dad had big trucks come in from up north and the Midwest to take the booze out,” Haney noted. “I recall this one time we loaded 400 gallons in a huge truck and they had a car in front of the truck and a car behind the truck, as the decoy and spotter. Dad had others making whiskey for him back in those days. We couldn’t fill all the orders.”

Haney stopped for a moment and with a frown on his face he uttered, “Sometimes the weasels would try and get away with the moonshine from the smokehouse after we loaded it and not pay. Oh, do I remember this one occasion. This hijacker took off before settling up with dad and one of the men shot him in the right leg. They all took off after him at day break and found him in Bowling Green, Kentucky, home, in bed with his leg up in a sling. They told me the hijacker said he didn’t have the money and one of dad’s men put this .45 Smith between his eyes and said, ‘Friend, it’s money or this slug in your brain.’ His wife came running up, shortly, with the \$200 or \$300.

“What people don’t understand, today, is that the moonshiners law and most obeyed it, although it was an unwritten set of laws,” Haney advised.

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“The best thing that could have happened to me occurred in 1943 when I was 18-years-old,” Joe Haney continued. “I was drafted in the Army. I was dead broke at the time. As I was about to get aboard the bus, Willie Lane, another fine whiskey-making man from Jackson County, flipped me a half dollar. Let me tell you, that .50 cent piece really came in handy and I will never forget. Willie for that and many, many other favors.

“While in the service I fought in the infantry during World War II in France, Germany and Belgium. I did a lot of thinking about whiskey making and the law during those war years. When I came back I told dad I was taking my \$300 mustering out pay and headin’ for California. My buddy and I took a couple of gallons of clear corn liquor with a good bead on it and by the time we made it to New Mexico we had killed the juice.

“I worked for Standard Oil of California in the gas and oil drilling profession. For the next 19 years I supervised their operations, many years of which was in the Far East. It was during this period I met my lovely wife Dorothy in California,” Haney proudly said and smiled. “In 1965 she and I came back to this area and opened the grocery store in West Cookeville. We called it ‘Haney’s Stop-Rite’. After 12 years we sold our store, in 1977, when the State of Tennessee needed a oil and gas inspector. I accepted their offer and I’ve been with them ever since. I work in the Geology Division of the Department of Conservation.”

After showing us one of his dad’s last special “double twist” runs of moonshine with the many small beads, the three of us drove to Standing Stone Rustic State Park, 25 miles north of Cookeville to view one of Tennessee’s largest moonshine stills. Luke strongly believes the 1,000 gallon pot now covered on the sides with stone, belonged to their old Overton County moonshiner, who died recently. Luke said, “I bought one of the first batches ever cooked in this pot.”

As the 99 degree June sun beckoned the three of us to search for shade we headed back to Smithville. Joe Haney waved and said, “Boys, when that book is published make sure

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I get a copy, my dad Carson would have wanted it this way. And, if a movie is made give me a yell so Dorothy and I can attend the premier showing.”